

**TITLE 26
PROCEDURAL RULES
WEST VIRGINIA BOARD OF
VETERINARY MEDICINE**

**SERIES 2
DISCIPLINARY AND COMPLAINT PROCEDURES OF THE WEST VIRGINIA
BOARD OF VETERINARY MEDICINE**

§26-2-1. General.

1.1. Scope. -- This rule specifies a procedure for the investigation and resolution of complaints against veterinarians.

1.2. Authority. -- W. Va. Code §30-10-1 ET seq. And § 30-1-1 *et seq.*

1.3. Filing Date. --. December 19, 2000

1.4. Effective Date. -- February 1, 2001.

§26-2-2. Application.

This rule applies to all licensed veterinarians.

§ 26-2-3. Definitions .

The following words and phrases as used in this rule have the following meanings, unless the context otherwise requires:

3.1. "Applicant" means any person making application for an original or renewal license or a temporary permit pursuant to West Virginia Code § 30-10-1 *et seq.*

3.2. "Board" means the West Virginia Board of Veterinary Medicine.

3.3. "License" means a license or temporary permit issued by the Board pursuant to W. Va. Code § 30-10-1 *et seq.*

3.4. "Licensed Veterinarian" means a person who practices veterinary medicine as defined by W. Va. Code § 30-10-1.

3.5. "Investigator" means a person hired by the Board for the purpose of reviewing and investigating complaints against licensed veterinarians.

§26-2-4. Causes for Denial, Probation, Limitation, Discipline, Suspension or Revocation of Veterinarians.

4.1. The Board may deny an application for license, place a licensee on probation, limit, restrict, suspend or revoke any license issued by the Board, upon satisfactory proof that a licensee has been convicted of a felony, or is, in his or her professional capacity, engaged in conduct, practices or acts constituting professional negligence or a willful departure from accepted standards of professional conduct in violation of West Virginia Code § 30-10-1 *et seq.* or the rules of the Board.

§26-2-5. Disposition of Complaints.

5.1. Any person, firm, corporation, member of the Board, or public officer may make a complaint to the Board which charges a licensed veterinarian or applicant with a violation of West Virginia Code § 30-10-1 *et seq.* or of the rules of the Board. The Board may provide a form for that purpose, but a complaint may be filed in any written form, accompanied by a notarized statement from the complainant. In addition to describing the alleged violation that prompted the complaint, the complaint shall contain the following:

5.1.1. The name and address of the licensed veterinarian against whom the complaint is lodged;

5.1.2. The dates of care;

5.1.3. The identity of any person who may have treated the animal after the alleged incident; and,

5.2. A complaint against a licensed veterinarian shall allege that such person has been convicted of a felony or is, in his or her professional capacity, engaging in conduct, practices or acts constituting professional negligence or a willful departure from accepted standards of professional conduct in violation of West Virginia Code § 30-10-1 *et. seq.* or the rules of the Board.

5.3. Complainants are immune from liability for the allegations contained in their complaints filed with the Board unless the complaint is filed in bad faith or for a malicious purpose.

5.4. The Board shall maintain a complaint log which records the receipt of each complaint, its nature and its disposition.

5.5. The Board shall maintain a separate file on each complaint received, and each file shall have a number assigned to it.

5.6. Upon receipt of a complaint, the Board shall issue one of the following acknowledgments to the complaint.

5.6.1. That the matter will be reviewed by the Board.

5.6.2. That the complaint is outside the jurisdiction of the Board, with suggestions as to how the complainant might best obtain a resolution of his or her problem; or,

5.6.3. That more information will be required in order to adequately review the individual complaint.

5.7. The Board shall send a copy of the complaint, including any supporting documentation, by certified mail to the licensee or applicant in question for his or her written response, and he or she shall submit a written response to the Board within thirty (30) days of the date of the Board's correspondence or waive the right to do so.

5.8. Requests for comment on complaints sent to licensees or applicants shall be considered properly served when sent to their last known address. It is the responsibility of the licensee or applicant to keep the Board informed of his or her last known address.

5.9. Upon receipt of a licensee's or applicant's comments in response to a complaint, the Board shall promptly send a copy of the same, including any supporting documentation, to the complainant.

5.10. After receipt and review of a complaint, unless the complaint is determined to fall within the provisions of sub-division 5.6.2 of this rule, the Board shall cause to be conducted any reasonable inquiry or investigation it considers necessary to determine the truth and validity of the allegations set forth in the complaint. The review of complaints or investigations thereof may, at the discretion of the Board, be assigned to a committee of the Board.

5.11. At any point in its investigation of a complaint, the investigation committee of the Board may, at its discretion, assign the matter to an investigator for review and investigation.

5.12. Upon receipt of a complaint from the Board, the investigator shall, within sixty (60) days, unless the Board specifies another time period, review and investigate the same and provide the Board with a written report. The report shall contain a statement of the allegations, a statement of facts, and an analysis of the complaint, including a description of the care provided, the records reviewed, persons interviewed and a statement of the investigator's findings. The investigator shall, upon request, be afforded an opportunity to have an investigation interview with the licensee or applicant in question, or other involved parties, a report of which shall be placed in the investigation file at the office of the Board.

5.13. To facilitate the disposition of a complaint, the Board or the committee of the Board may request any person to attend an informal conference, or to appear at a regular meeting of the Board, at any time prior to the Board entering any order with respect to the complaint. The Board shall give notice of the conference, which notice shall include a statement of issues to be informally discussed. Statements made at a conference may not be introduced at any subsequent hearing on the merits without the consent of all parties to the hearing. No prejudice shall attach for failure to attend a conference pursuant to a request.

5.14. The Board investigating committee or chairperson, or the executive director may issue subpoenas and subpoenas duces tecum to complete the Board's investigation and to determine the truth or validity of complaints. The investigator may request the Board or its investigation committee to issue a subpoena or subpoena duces tecum. A brief written statement specifying the necessity for the same shall accompany any such request.

5.15. At any point in the course of the investigation or inquiry into a complaint, the Board may determine that there is not and will not be sufficient evidence to warrant further proceedings, or that the complaint fails to allege misconduct for which a licensed veterinarian may be sanctioned by the Board: Provided, that in the event the review and investigation of a complaint is assigned to the committee or investigator, the committee or investigator shall make their respective findings and recommendations to the Board prior to the Board dismissing the complaint.

§26-2-6. Contested Case Hearings.

6.1. The Board may suspend a license or refuse to renew a license if it determines there is probable cause to believe that the licensed veterinarian's conduct, practices or acts constitute an immediate danger to the public.

§26-2-7. Appeals.

7.1. Any applicant who has had his or her application for a license denied by order of the Board may appeal the order within thirty (30) days of that action in accordance with the contested case hearing procedures set forth in West Virginia Code § 29A-6-1 *et seq.* and the rules of the Board: Provided, that the appeal shall not include cases in which the Board denies a license or certificate after an examination to test the knowledge or the ability of an applicant, where the controversy concerns whether the examination was fair or whether the applicant passed the examination.